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Statement on the question of East Timor

The following statement is attributable to the Spokeswoman for the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The Secretary-General held a fourth round of meetings in Geneva on 6 May 1994 with the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal, Mr. Ali Alatas and Mr. Durão Barroso, as had been agreed at the third round of talks in New York on 17 September 1993, in the context of the on-going efforts under his auspices, to seek a just, comprehensive, and internationally acceptable settlement to the question of East Timor. The Secretary-General met separately with each of the two Ministers and subsequently chaired a joint meeting.

The discussions focused on confidence-building measures (CBMs) aimed at fostering an atmosphere propitious to addressing the substance of the question. In this regard the Secretary-General wishes to record the following points which emerged during the discussions:

1. The Secretary-General welcomed the positive atmosphere in which the talks were held and the restraint displayed by both sides at international fora, which made possible the adoption by consensus of a Chairman's statement on the human rights situation in East Timor at the 50th session of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. The Secretary-General called on both sides to build on that consensus through the implementation of the recommendations contained therein.

2. The Ministers reacted positively to the Secretary-General's appeal to both parties to continue to exercise restraint on the issue of East Timor in the interest of maintaining a favourable atmosphere for further progress towards a comprehensive settlement of the question.

3. The Ministers conveyed their appreciation to the Secretary-General for conducting thorough consultations prior to today's talks, in particular through the despatch of a mission in January 1994 to Lisbon, Jakarta, Dili and Sidney to carry out preparatory discussions with both sides and other contacts in his efforts to assist in the solution of the question. They took note of the Secretary-General's intention to undertake similar consultations and contacts whenever he deems necessary.

4. The meeting took note of the Indonesian Government's intention to continue its investigation in order to account fully for the persons dead or missing as a result of the violent incident in Dili on 12 November 1991 and the circumstances surrounding the matter.

5. The Secretary-General is encouraged by the increased access to East Timor for the United Nations, human rights and humanitarian organizations as well as journalists. He is also encouraged by the visits to East Timor by East Timorese living abroad and by East Timorese visiting Portugal. The Ministers agreed that such access and visits should be continued and further expanded.

6. The Ministers concurred on the need to ensure that those East Timorese in custody are treated humanely, that their rights are respected fully, and that further appropriate measures are taken aimed at the early release of those imprisoned.

7. The invitation extended by the Indonesian Government to the Special Rapporteur on Extra-judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions of the Commission on Human Rights to visit East Timor in June 1994 was welcomed. It was deemed important that the Government of Indonesia continue to cooperate with other relevant thematic special rapporteurs and/or working groups of the Commission and that they be invited to visit East Timor whenever necessary for the fulfilment of their duties.

8. The Secretary-General believes that, as an important contribution to the on-going efforts under his auspices, the dialogue among East Timorese should be encouraged. He will explore appropriate efforts to be undertaken towards facilitating an all-inclusive intra-Timorese dialogue. The two Ministers took note of this initiative.

9. The Foreign Ministers of Portugal and Indonesia informed the Secretary-General of their readiness to meet with leading East Timorese supporters and opponents of integration respectively.

10. The Ministers requested the Secretary-General to identify a series of issues for consideration by them in advance of the next round of talks, including possible avenues towards achieving a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution.

Following today's discussions the parties agreed to continue their efforts under the auspices of the Secretary-General to find a solution to the question of East Timor. The fifth meeting between the Foreign Ministers and the Secretary-General will be held in the first half of January 1995 in Geneva. Prior to that meeting talks will be held at UN headquarters in New York between the representatives of the two Governments.

Geneva, 6 May 1994